

1Tim 24-06-02a

Good morning, welcome to Sunday morning here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We're in the gospel of 1 Timothy chapter 4. We have seen the warnings about deception and false doctrine. We are getting an emphasis on the advantages of the truth as we look at this section in chapter 4 verses 6 through 11.

Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study and we'll dive in. Father, it is such a wonderful blessing and provision that You grant to us in cleansing us of our sins so that we can forget those things which are behind and pressed toward the mark of the high calling that You have communicated to us through the Lord Jesus. We thank You for this portion of Scripture and those that inform it and surround it.

We pray that as we look at these truths together that the Holy Spirit will bless them to each of our hearts. We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen. Reading our passage, if you instruct the brethren, I'm picking up in 1 Timothy 4, verse 6, if you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ.

If you look down at verse 11, these things command and teach. This little mini section begins and ends with how important it is, not that these things are true, but that they be communicated. It isn't enough that the truth is on the page of the Scripture, that it has been given to the Apostle Paul as part of the mysteries that the Lord Jesus called him to be a steward of and messenger for.

But communication only succeeds if the loop is closed and the information that is passed along reaches the destination, is understood, and acted on. Why doesn't it just say, teach these things? Did you notice that it requires being followed by the messenger? We have seen, and we'll see again, the qualifications for leadership in the church, to exercise the sort of limited authority that takes place in a church to ensure that things are done decently and in good order, that the people with a need are cared for, attention is paid to them. This is the idea of the widows in the church in Acts, where the deacons are charged with attending to distribution of food and making sure that other needs are met, so that the teaching elders, the apostles, can give themselves to study, and that there's not a distraction.

They're not dividing their time and unable to do this most important function. So what is the benefit of this sound doctrine as opposed to the false prophecy, the false teaching? How important is it for us to be able to tell the two apart? A little pop quiz question here. How do you tell truth from error? How do you tell what is false doctrine from what is genuine doctrine? What part of your God-given spiritual makeup accomplishes that function? What are the three things in chapter one, the goal of our instruction? A pure heart, a good conscience, and a genuine faith, unhypocritical, un-hypocrites, not a shell, not a falsehood, not a put-on, not a false front.

The goal of the instruction is love. Love is the measure of whether our faith and our hope are motivating us and defining the course of our day. And the outworking of it should be love.

How do we treat each other? What is our attitude toward God? The goal of our instruction is love. How do you make that love happen? It doesn't just happen as a reflex. It doesn't just occur like a bolt of lightning out of a clear blue sky.

There is a source of love. There is a way for love to be generated and shed abroad in our hearts. If you go to Romans chapter five, read through to the fifth verse, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

But again, He doesn't come like a lightning bolt out of a clear blue sky. There are conditions for the effectiveness of His presence in His ministry. He indwells us, but does He fill us? He is there to lead and guide and to bring to our minds the truth.

But have we learned truth so that He can bring it to our minds? Have we refreshed our memory? Have we gone back and reviewed and reflected on things that we have just learned? This is like eating a meal. It needs to happen several times a day to give us strength and to keep us outwardly focused and not become depressed, discouraged, worried, doubtful, confused, and most of all, not deceived. Many of these other problems in the soul can be traced back to a faulty understanding, a faulty take, a faulty grasp of what's really going on.

Why do we worry? We're not sufficiently reminded of God's grace and God's power. Why are we depressed? We are not sufficiently grounded in the truths that form the bedrock, the rock on which our house is built. And when we forget the stability, we forget the certainty, we forget the wonderful joy and peace that the Holy Spirit provides regardless of circumstances, we fool away our birthright for a mess of pottage.

And the pottage isn't even hot. So that is the importance of what we have here. So what are the primary dangers from departure from the faith? The Spirit expressly says in verse 1 in latter times, some will depart from the faith, giving heed to these deceptions, seductions, and false doctrines, demonic doctrines.

This goes back to the Lord Jesus. You can't even get past the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 7, 15, Jesus said, with all of the beatitudes, blessed are the peacemakers, blessed are they who mourn, blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness and so on.

But in chapter 7, verse 15, an equally important exhortation is beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. They are after something other than truth and benefit of fellow believers. And they are a source.

The teaching doesn't just float in empty space. There is a communication. So we have to

guard who we listen to, what we listen to.

It's fine to listen to false teachers. We listen to them all the time as an exercise in discernment. Where did this go wrong? He started out in book, chapter, and verse of the Bible, read the passage, pointed out some things that are manifestly true.

But before you get through that message, you are suddenly in heresy or blasphemy or weird weeds and off the path. It doesn't lead to love from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith. Instead, it appeals to those who don't have a conscience that can tell the difference.

That conscience is seared with a hot iron and that characterizes the communicators and it also characterizes the hearers. We receive truth from faith to faith and deception and false doctrine comes from one bad conscience to another. So Jesus himself said, watch out, identify and don't be taken in by false prophets.

And they don't come to you with a whole new uniform and a whole new society and a whole new appearance. They come in sheep's clothing. If you give a quick glance, you think, well, this is a fellow sheep in the flock.

But they are wolves, ravenous wolves, hungry wolves. They are trying to fill a need of their own, whether it's relevance, fame, sell another book for more money, adulation, a kind of social power that is appealing to people who like to be influencers on social media and listened to and quoted and spoken of and patted on the back at conferences and invited to speak and invited to write yet another book or give yet another helpful Christian resource. But there is some personal desire that is a hunger and they are a ravenous wolf, not a fellow sheep.

Secondly, Paul is going to tell us in second Timothy, this will be study after next. We'll do first Timothy, Titus and then second Timothy for all still here and have the opportunity. But in second Timothy four, three and four, the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.

This goes to sort of the other end of the equation. There's the law of supply and demand. Why is there so much candy at Walmart? Because people buy candy.

Why is there so much pop? Why is there a double row of potato chips? It's not that these are healthy, nutritious, weight loss, energy foods that, you know, go back to the days of wonderful, you know, Ezekiel bread. And boy, I just feel better every time I pound down another bag of Lay's potato chips or, you know, drink another two liter jug of pop. Why is there so much false doctrine out there? Why is there so much progressive deconstruct, reconstruct kingdom now nonsense that distorts and perverts the truth of God's word? Why is it so prevalent? Because there is a market and sound doctrine doesn't appeal.

I don't like that. It's traditional. That's what my grandpa thought.

And I never did like him much. That's insensitive. That's exclusionary.

That makes people feel bad about themselves. It's not inclusive. That's not really love.

I know what love is. And love doesn't make anybody feel bad. And yet scripture says, whom the Lord loves, he disciplines.

He chastens them with a whip. He scourges them with a whip. How pleasant is that? And the Bible says no discipline is pleasant when you're first getting it, but it afterward yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

You go through an unpleasant process to gain a wonderful benefit. Exercise can be off-putting. Nobody likes the feel of lactic acid coursing through their veins and arteries.

But with consistency and with dedication, you end up being fit. You last longer. You feel better.

You have more energy. You can do more things. You can be more helpful to others.

If you're not out of shape, sitting on the couch watching TV with a bottle of Coke and a bag of chips, the time will come. So the first part, when the Lord Jesus was talking in Matthew 7, it talks about the communicators of this falsehood. They are ravening wolves in sheep's clothing.

Paul in 2 Timothy 4, 3 and 4 is talking about the other end. Somebody's the pitcher and somebody's the catcher. Here, the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.

What does that tell you about a Bible class that gets a bit tedious? We're supposed to endure, right? Endurance. They will not endure sound doctrine. It's not so much how long can you sit there while someone drones on.

The impact of the sound doctrine is cognitive dissonance. I don't want to hear that. I don't like to think that Jesus is going to judge anyone or that everyone's not included, regardless of their personal habits and bad choices.

God loves everyone. It's the gentle Jesus leading two children through a field of daisies with an afternoon sun shining through the glistening blonde locks and the little wheat threads. Oh, what a glorious picture.

They will not endure sound doctrine, but notice, according to their own desires, the ravening wolves are feeding their hunger. Those who don't endure sound doctrine have some other desire, according to their own desire, because they have itching ears. I want something that sounds good.

I want to be uplifted. I want the worship team to come in and waft me heavenward on a

wave of emotional emptiness, foam without substance, sand without rock. They have itching ears.

This is especially interesting to me. Again, we're in 2 Timothy 4, 3, and 4. They will heap up for themselves teachers. It doesn't say they're going to find one charismatic teacher and follow him.

Do you notice that in the modern day there's not one single figure that leads the progressive movement? There's not one single church that is dominating the mainstream, all-inclusive, pabulum-serving church. There are dozens and dozens. You walk an aisle in a Christian bookstore, quote-unquote, and there's author after author, publisher after publisher, series after series, resource after resource, program after blog, after video, after you name it.

There are dozens and dozens and dozens of influencers and thought leaders and authors and pastors who are going beyond their church to win a wider audience. They heap up for themselves teachers, plural. There's nothing wrong with listening to more than one teacher.

I encourage it. It's healthy. Iron sharpens iron.

It is good to compare and contrast. If something seems confusing, see what somebody else has to say. But to do it for the wrong reasons.

If I'm confused about a passage, I will study it for myself. If I can't draw a conclusion, I'll see what other guys have had to say. I read one person whose scholarship and godly approach I generally trust, and if that doesn't satisfy me, I'll check somebody else and check somebody else.

If I am on a search for the truth because I want to live my life in a way that pleases God and I want to speak the truth in love with fellow believers, that's one thing. If I am consulting and listening to and marveling at and applauding heaps and heaps of teachers because I have itching ears and I want somebody to dazzle me, I want someone to give me something fresh and something different and something that the next time I have a conversation with someone I can say, oh, here's a little tidbit I bet you've never heard before, and so on. Itching ears, heaping up for themselves teachers, they will turn their ears away from the truth.

Ears are mentioned twice here. They have itching ears and the truth doesn't scratch that itch, and so they turn their ears away from the truth and are turned aside to fables. Fables.

Think about a fable. What exactly is a fable? We've got Aesop's fables. You've got Br'er Rabbit and other.

I recently got myself a copy of a set of books that we had around here when I was a child. I really love them. They're called Book Trails, and they are a collection of stories and mythology and fables from all around the world, and so Goldilocks and the Three Bears and Rumpelstiltskin and many other obscure stories.

These stories used to be current and people would allude to them in conversation as illustrations and as metaphors, and some of them are kind of boring and you think, why did I bother to read two and a half pages? That didn't really have a zinger at the end, but it came from someplace in northern Europe, and it's cold and they don't have much to do, and even the most lame fable will entertain people that are waiting for summer. But turning their ears away from the truth and turning aside to fables. Fables incorporate elements of reality.

You have people who live in houses. They open and shut doors. They want to eat a sausage, and the husband gets mad at the wife and forgets that they have only three wishes, and he says, I wish you'd quit complaining about that sausage.

I wish it was on your nose, and suddenly it is, and one of your three wishes is gone. But within the magic and the mythology, it is framed in reality. Husbands and wives exist.

Tables and sausages exist, and so it is a mixture, and this is my point. A fable is a mixture of truth and fantasy. Things that are completely fantastic quickly begin to lose traction.

You need reality and then something extraordinary within this setting. That's what a fable is, and it appeals because it's unusual, and it's striking to the imagination, and oh, I wish someone would come along and give me three wishes. Oh, wait, I just used a wish.

I wish I had three more wishes, and of course, they always put the caveat, you can't wish for more wishes, but it's a fable. But the elements of reality are used to get the story across in the same way false doctrine has elements of truth. They'll quote the Lord Jesus.

They will cite his example. It will be scripture. People will say, praise God and mention the Lord Jesus and communicate it in his name.

They look like a sheep. Well, there's the wool. There's the color.

They're found where sheep are found. This must be okay, and it is this admixture. It is getting fooled by what appears to be sound.

Maybe there really is a prince in Nigeria, and he's got \$50 million that he can't get out without my help. Maybe there really is a contest that I have won. For a while, I think the government finally shut this down, but they were mailing out envelopes to people like the publisher's clearinghouse sweepstake, and it said on the outside, you have won.

You have won. And people were saying, what do I do? And they were getting all kinds of contact. Are there sweepstakes? Are there winners? Is there money in America that you can spend? Yes.

But the one element, you have won, was a deception. And if you read the fine print, you've won a three-month subscription to a magazine, Motor Trends, and you're a grandma looking after kids while your daughter's working or whatever. You have won, but you didn't win the big sweepstakes, but it was so deceptive, and you had to read the fine print.

This is how demons and those with a seared conscience get their stuff across. People have itching ears. Do people want to hear that they won the lottery? Of course.

Do they want to hear that the sweepstakes picked their name and they're set for life? Of course. That's what ears want to hear. I want to hear that Jesus loves me for who I am, and I don't need to change.

He likes me just like I am. Does the Bible say that God loves us? Yes. Does God accept us when we come to Him regardless of past sins, failures? Yes.

Does God love me just the way I am? That is the devil's own lie. God does not love sin. He does not love my sinful nature.

He doesn't love my inconsistency. He doesn't love my selfishness. He doesn't love a whole lot of things about me that need to change.

This twisted truth that God loves me and God wants a personal relationship with me. You hear this all the time. We heard it yesterday in a Bible presentation that was otherwise quite good, but in the midst of it, God loves you.

God wants a deep, personal, intimate relationship with you. This is deceptive. Does God want and indeed does God have a personal relationship with us? Yes, He does.

He is our Father. We are His child. But the way this comes across is, I'm special and God loves me for the unique things that make me me, and He loves me just the way I am.

God is up there on His throne kind of pining, wishing that Sam would spend more time with Him and would appreciate Him more and would spend more time in conversation. God's sort of a needy God and He wants a deep, personal relationship with me that He doesn't yet have. He's up there on the throne with His chin on His knuckles just trying to figure out, how can I get Sam into a more deep and intimate, personal relationship with me? It's balderdash.

This is the God of the universe before whom the cherubim and seraphim bow. This is the Creator God, whose voice thunders from the throne room and galaxies come into being.

Yes, God loves us.

Yes, God wants us to be related to Him and to call Him our Father. But this is a relationship characterized by the fear of the Lord, the awe of the Lord, the deep and abiding respect that reminds us that it is a tremendous privilege not to be taken for granted to walk through the veil of the torn flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ to come into His presence and make our requests known. You don't come shuffling in there in a t-shirt and flip-flops and say, how you doing God? You know, I had an idea here that I wanted to run by you because you have such a deep personal relationship with Him.

When a vision of God's presence appeared, the prophets were down on their face. When Peter realized that it was the Lord Jesus who caused the fish to appear on the other side of the boat, he fell on his face and said, depart from me, I'm a sinful man. The Lord Jesus and Peter spent a lot of time together.

And that other side of the boat fish episode was after the wedding feast of Cana, after meeting Him down at the Jordan with John's baptism, after many months and experiences had passed. But Peter suddenly realized this is the divine person before me. And he was down on his face.

He wasn't coming up there schlepping for a big sloppy hug. And it's deceptive because when people picture God that way, there is no fear of the Lord in this place. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Do a quick devotional, take five verses about the fear of the Lord each morning for a while. We are supposed to have a healthy, balanced fear of the Lord to appreciate the grace and the glory of God and not constantly harp on, you know, God is just up there with kind of an empty room wishing I was there to smile and exchange stories and so on. It's a deception.

It is a doctrine of demons because we do not judge ourselves and we don't think about the judgment of God. If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. Judgment has to happen.

God is a God of judgment. But if you limit Him to, well, Jesus said, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father. Jesus never judged anybody.

But look, He let the woman caught in adultery go. So there's no judgment. I don't have to worry about sin.

I don't have to examine myself to see if I'm in the faith. It doesn't matter what I do. God loves me.

He wants a deep, personal relationship with me. There are true elements because God is a God of love. He is our Heavenly Father.

But it's a twisted truth. It's a distorted and perverted truth. And it derails believers by the millions.

Anytime I think I've fouled up, well, God wants a deep, personal relationship with me. He's not going to come down with one foot or two for my failures. And I'll go to Him when I need something.

But the rest of the He's up there just waiting for me to come around because He wants a deep, personal relationship with me. It's horrific. The time will come, 2 Timothy 4, 3, and 4. They will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires.

Whose desires should we be endeavoring to fulfill? It is God's desire that we be holy, that we be faithful, that we pay attention to who we are and why we're here, that we represent the Lord Jesus Christ as His body on this earth. It's a high responsibility and one that is a privilege. And we ought to be aware of it and be thinking about it and endeavoring to fulfill it in whatever we are doing, in whatever state we find ourselves, to remember that we are under observation.

Our light should be shining so that people will glorify the Father. They will heap up for themselves teachers because they have itching ears. They will turn their ears away from the truth, be turned aside to fictions, to fables, to narratives, to stories that sound good, but don't reflect reality.

Paul warns the Galatians in he doesn't, he gets the first five verses out of the way. And in verse six of chapter one of Galatians, I marvel that you are turning away so soon from him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel, which is not really a gospel at all. There are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ, the truth of Christ.

Even if we are an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be cursed. This is how important it is to not be fooled by false teachers.

First John four, one beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits. Determine whether they are from God because many false prophets have gone out into the world. If there were many false prophets when the apostle John was still alive, how many do you think there are now? Paul tells the Ephesian elders in Acts chapter 20 verses 29 and 30, I know this, after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after themselves. This is personality spirituality. This is when people get hung up on a communicator or an author or a particular program authored by such people.

And it becomes about the guru, about the leader of some particular line of thought. Men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves. Now I'm following the communicator.

I'm no longer following the Lord Jesus and I am no longer seeking the truth. My ears itch. This person presents it in a way that I like and God bless faithful communicators of the word of God.

But the reason they can be appreciated, and I have met had many in my life, I deeply appreciate those who have gone before me and some who are functioning now who are dedicated to finding and communicating the truth. And I really appreciate them. But I don't follow them.

I go for the truth that they unearth, that they describe and beautifully communicate. It's wonderfully helpful. It is edifying and built up, but there is a difference.

If you go to a restaurant and you have the best meal of whatever kind, you like seafood or you like some beef dish or whatever else it may be, it is absolutely melt in your mouth, the best food you've ever eaten in your life. You can say you all must have a really good chef at this restaurant, but you don't go in there and develop a deep personal relationship with the chef. You appreciate what the chef produced.

He loves good food and so do you, but your connection is the great food. The truth that faithful communicators present, that is our common ground. Communicators come and go.

The grass withers and the flower fades. It is the word of our God that stands forever. That is what we love.

That is what we pursue. That is our common bond, is we have received the love of the truth. Unlike those that are going to be deceived in the last days, they did not like to receive a love of the truth.

It doesn't say they did not like to receive a love of Jesus or a love of Paul or a love, even the Lord Jesus himself. And this is a really tricky area. People get confused by making things all about Jesus.

Oh, how I love Jesus. And there is absolutely a place and a proper level of love for the Lord Jesus. But every time people started focusing on the Lord Jesus, what did he say? I'm the way to the Father.

If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. If you love me, you love the Father. And don't stop short.

The problem being that many people who love Jesus, quote, unquote, love a version of

Jesus they have created or has been created for them by someone. It is the Jesus of the Beatitudes. It is the Jesus with the child on his knee.

It is the Jesus who tells the woman, go your way and sin no more. Are there none here who condemn thee? Neither do I condemn thee. And taking an aspect or one dimension or two dimensions of the Lord Jesus and loving that is not genuine love for the Lord Jesus.

He is also the glowing deity on the white horse with a sword issuing forth from his mouth. He is the God of judgment as well as a God of grace and a God of love. And to only love the humanity and the suffering servant side of the Lord Jesus is twisted.

It's a deception. People get married because they have an idyllic view of the person they are marrying. And not every marriage survives the reality that sets in when the cap is left off the toothpaste and the lid's up on the commode and the dishes are in the sink and the guy is grouchy and unkind.

And, you know, there is a fulsomeness to relationship that appreciates everything about another person and understands it and in us in the fallen world puts up with it. But if you're going to love the Lord Jesus, you've got to love all of him, not one diminished reader's digest, condensed presentation of him. And that is to present a false Jesus, to not show everything.

You remember when they used to have glamour shots and those of us who are manifestly not magazine cover material, you go in there, they work on you for an hour and a half, they carefully pose you, they get the light just right and it doesn't even look like you, which is the whole point. It looks beautiful and handsome and perfect. But you can't live up to that.

You can't look like that all the time. Movie stars don't look like movie stars when you meet them. I've met some at airports and such and people don't look like they look when they've been airbrushed or cosmetified and dolled up by six or seven stylists and so on.

You can't be that way all the time. And people who idealize the Lord Jesus are going to discover that he's not like that all the time. He doesn't always have a child in his lap.

Sometimes he's riding the horse and he's leading an army and there's blood running as high as the bridles. And there's a reason for it. It's necessary.

It is a part of his character. It is a part of his being God. If you think about the old essence box, some of us learned years ago, God, what is the very first thing in that convenient summary of God's characteristics? God is what? Sovereignty, righteousness, justice, love.

But God's love is balanced by his righteousness, his justice, his sovereignty. He is

omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent. He never changes.

He's immutable. And he is the definition of truth. So beware, in Colossians 2 verse 8, lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

It's Colossians 2 verse 8. You will be cheated by people who employ philosophy and empty deceit and the traditions of men and the basic principles of the world. This is science. Well, this underscores the importance of being vigilant, of having discernment, having a good conscience that can tell the difference.

And being dedicated to sound doctrine, to the truth so that we're not misled, we're not cheated, we're not neutralized, we're not led astray. We don't actually go over to the other side and become an enemy of the cross through deception and doctrines of demons. This is our daily task.

In the same way that if you spend your life on a computer every day, you've got to constantly watch out for being fooled by an email attachment or being hacked or letting your guard down. It doesn't matter how many successful days you have had of fending off attacks. It only takes one bad day and suddenly all of your valuable data is locked for ransomware.

Your past track record doesn't help. Well, we've never had a breach. We've never had a security problem.

We've never been hacked. It doesn't matter. Today is the day you can't let yourself get hacked.

Today is the day you can't be deceived. Today is the day you can't be sloppy with your passwords. Today is the day you can't use Venmo with an instant cash transfer that you can never get back when you find out the destination is false.

You can't rely on the past. Today is the day for vigilance. Today is the day for dedication.

Today is the day for relying on the grace of God and provision of God to be centered in the truth and not be cheated, not be misled. Let no man deceive you. Well, it's kind of a terse warning there, but it is essential.

We are of no use in representing the Lord Jesus if we let ourselves be deceived. Well, we'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll move forward in our passage in 1 Timothy chapter 4.